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## THE RECOVERY.

A Story of Kentucky

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(Continued.)

I could not doubt his words, and I felt alarm, too; alarm on account of Alicia, upon whom this arrival would put shame.

I watched Pauline Harmon, and I saw well how potent her charms could be with a man in whom the intellectual element was lacking. The outlines of her figure were graceful and fine, her color was delicate, and she showed at all times the supple and velvety ease and strength of a tigress. Physically she was a splendid woman, and I sighed for Alicia's sake, because another could draw from her husband whom I despised, and of whom I wished that she was rid forever. Such curious creatures are we! Her eyes passing over the floor of the House, perhaps with the cool examining gaze of the tigress seeking possible victims, alighted at last upon me, and my look met hers. She smiled—it was a warm, ingratiating smile, giving her face the look of an innocent woman—and she made me a little bow, which I returned. Smile and bow together said: "Come out and talk to me," but I pretended not to understand, and turned back to the letter of that very prim and precise person, Aunt Jane. What a world of difference between her and Pauline Harmon!

But Pauline Harmon did not lack attention. Harrison himself went into the lobby to see her, and, once fully a dozen members of the House drifted to the same place, where she formed a little court, in the center of which she sparkled and shone. It seemed to me, as I watched her occasional glances, that she was somewhat modified in manner since I had last seen her in Louisville, that is to say, subdued and restrained, her voice as not so loud, her gestures not so extreme, and I fancied that I saw about her, despite her bright dress, a certain primness ridiculously suggestive of Aunt Jane.

"What is she doing here?" I asked. "A new enemy for you. She has come to fight you."

"Don't joke," I said. "I am in earnest. She tells me that she has come to Frankfort to lobby against the Peden Bill. I think you'd better be on your guard. She's perhaps more formidable than you suppose."

### CHAPTER XIII.

The Vote.

I was deeply disturbed by the appearance at Frankfort of Pauline Harmon in her new phase. Pauline Harmon who was beautiful and attracted the eyes of men because she could not help it. This latest mood of hers might do great damage.

I was not wrong in my surmise, as I saw the next morning one of those silent dramas that are often more vivid and striking than others full of words. I had gone down to breakfast rather early, and Jimmy Warfield and I were sitting at our usual small table in the semi-saloon formed by the window and the wall. We were not talking at all, each being preoccupied, and when we had been there about five minutes the Grey family entered all together, for the first time in days.

Behind the "Grey family" I included Mrs. Warren, who in fact came in first, head erect as usual, her gaze turning neither to the right nor to the left, the very personification of cool insolence and calculation. After her followed Alicia, singularly girlish in her sweetness and pallor, but not without the quiet dignity of a woman who had suffered and who yet was strong. Behind Alicia a full ten feet walked Grey, a man whom life at the capital had not improved at all, his cheeks redder than ever and folds of flesh showing under his heavy coat. I presume that the primeval man slew his rival for the love of a woman whenever he could, and I never looked at Grey without feeling this ancient, far-off instinct of murder rise within me, handed down perhaps from some ancestor a million years ago. It was better a hundred times that she should belong to Harrison, who, having as he was, had heart and soul enough to know Alicia and to value and guard her as a precious jewel.

Mrs. Warren did not look in our direction, but Alicia saw us and bowed. Grey's heavy eyes roved toward us and then passed on; if we made any impact upon his vision he ignored it.

"Shabbad again," murmured Jimmy Warfield, "and by the future Governor of Kentucky."

I could not restrain a smile at his irony. As if Jimmy Warfield cared a particle whether a man like George Grey ever noticed him or not! Yet Grey must have been particularly sullen about something, as in his character of a rising statesman it was his policy to be polite to everybody if he could.

I did not wish to act the part of a spy in the remotest sense, but I could not sit in the same room with Alicia and not look at her often. I saw that she scarcely noticed her husband, and the sight gave me pleasure. Whenever she spoke her words were addressed to her mother, and Gray ate in a heavy and sullen silence.

It was in the late winter, so late that spring was elbowing the old boy hard, and there was a whisper in the air of mellow days to come. When I was not glancing toward Alicia, I was looking out of the window at the houses and the far hills outlined like a picture in the brilliant morning sunlight. It was the call of youth to me, and already in fancy I saw the same hills in deep green outlined against a horizon of silky, summer blue. I came back to reality, and as I turned my eyes I saw Pauline Harmon in the most becoming of morning dresses entering the room.

Mrs. Harmon was looking extremely well, fresh, rosy, graceful and entirely in command of herself. When I saw her I glanced instinctively at the Sherry table, and I caught at once the vivid impression that was made upon the face of every one of the three. Alicia—I presumed that she had now learned what Pauline Harmon was capable of—what she stood in her life—flushed a deep angry red and then turned absolutely white. She gave Pauline Harmon a glance of aversion, contempt and disgust, another just like it to her husband, and then, white still and as cold as ice, she looked only at the table before her.

Mrs. Warren examined Pauline Harmon with a cool, calculating eye. She was angry, but in her anger was a certain calculation, as of one who weighed the chances. George Grey showed fright. His lips and heavy jaw trembled, and he glanced apprehensively at Mrs. Harmon, his wife and his mother-in-law, each time with the air of a whipped dog. I was sorry to see Alicia Grey and Pauline Harmon brought face to face, but I had sympathy for George Grey. He had made the net for himself, and, since he was caught in it, he might wriggle as he could.

Jimmy Warfield also saw and observed perhaps more than I, but he said nothing. He was truly my friend, but he had the innate delicacy that is the gift of the gods, and we went on with our breakfast, speaking only of topics that were far from the immediate minds of both of us. I could not keep my eyes from the Grey table, and I shared the painful strain that endured there, not that of the mercenary mother, nor that of the whipped dog of a husband, but that of Alicia, who deserved so much of the gods and who received so little. Grey kept his red face in his plate, and I wondered whether his apprehension was really due to a sense of shame or to a fear lest a scandal might injure his political campaign.

Alone among all the actors in this worthless little tragedy, Pauline Harmon was neither angry nor embarrassed; on the contrary, I had a secret belief that she was enjoying herself. Her demure role was preserved; she was not expansive, her gaze did not rove about the room, but when she bowed to two or three acquaintances, myself among them, she turned her attention to the letters that lay beside her plate, and sat there quietly, a bright bit of life and femininity, apparently without a care.

I think about half an hour passed, and then Alicia was the first of those concerned to leave the room. She gazed straight before her as she went out and never once looked aside. After she was gone Mrs. Warren examined Pauline Harmon more at length, but the shy creature seemed to take no notice of the inspection, and still remained without a care. Then Mrs. Warren rose, and with a sweeping glance of command took her son-in-law by the arm.

Harrison, who in his character of best friend to Grey quickly learned everything, gave me the next news. I was taking my favorite walk on the hill when I saw an athletic figure approaching. I strolled slowly on, but he soon overtook me.

"You were a witness of the Harmon's debut at the Capitol," he said, "and I wish to know, and you think it no more than right to tell you how affairs are going."

He paused, as if waiting the word from me whether to continue or to stop. I wished to know, and yet it was deeply distasteful to me to hear him talk about Alicia or the things that concerned her. But his pause was only momentary, and he went on: "Grey is in a state, hard to describe, because that state is composed of so many and such differing elements. He is in a rage at his wife, because she treats him as one whom she never saw before; he is in a funk lest he be compromised when he is in the public eyes; he is chagrined because Pauline Harmon came here when he told her not to do so, and, above all, he is jealous on her account."

"Jealous?" I exclaimed in surprise. "Of whom?" "Me," he replied, with a grimace. "You!"

"Yes, it is I. I note your astonishment, and I take it as a compliment. He tried to hide it, but he really thinks I want to usurp his place with Pauline Harmon, merely because I have been polite to her once or twice since she came. Why, no wonder! He has more cause to be jealous nearer home, the blind idiot! As if I could put Pauline Harmon in the same world with Alicia Grey, a woman who is as far above her as heaven above hell and who is also more beautiful."

My heart had an unaccountable manner of warming toward Harrison at times, and this was such a time. He put Alicia upon the pedestal where he knew she belonged.

"I thank you for the comparison," I said.

"Any fool should know it," he added. We walked on a little while longer in silence, and then I asked: "Do you think that Mrs. Grey, knowing what she now knows, will go back to Louisville?"

"And abandon the field to an unopposed rival? No! No woman would do it."

"That was my opinion, but I wished to have yours, too. I leave you here. So long."

I watched him striding away toward the town, trim, athletic, a fine specimen of a man mentally and physically, if only the moral equipment had been equal. I am the more confirmed in my opinion, that no man could be as one can be really great without moral stamina. Both morality and the praising of it often seem commonplace, but it counts; the greatest statesmen are never won by cunning and chicanery.

Beyond her chosen character of lobbyist Pauline Harmon's conduct at the capital was eminently conventional. She said that wealthy men had paid her to come to Frankfort and talk against the Peden Bill, and she mentioned the name of Cobbett. I knew how easily a clever and cunning woman could influence a man like the flat manufacturer, and I could well believe it possible that he had had a part in sending her. Moreover, a cousin, a thin, timid woman in the sixties, had appeared, and Pauline Harmon's suitable shapewear at the hotel.

There was nothing on the surface with which one could find fault, and the beautiful young widow made progress. She gathered about herself a court—in fact a little salon—and in less than a week she was a conspicuous figure in Frankfort. She was, it is true, by the women, but more often sought by the men. Harrison himself was one of those frequently in attendance, and I verily believe that he did it to annoy Grey. I gave him full credit for what he said to me on the hill, and I did not believe the charms of Pauline Harmon had any attraction for him.

I saw now the power of beauty, intelligence and quiet conduct. I had known before that Pauline Harmon was not lacking in mind, and when she showed in Frankfort a modest manner and indulged in a conversation that often tended to the serious people began to speak differently of her. A reputation, rather full-blown, had preceded her, but many now believed it to have been a mistake, and the revelation, as it usually does, went to a simplification of her other direction. Her life at the capital was quite unimpeachable, and Mrs. Crossfield, the thin, elderly cousin, who had little to say, was always present in her apartments when she gave her receptions.

Winter receded a little more and spring appeared here and there in the grass, and tender young buds were forming on the trees. I felt its sparkle in my blood, and I was in a lighter mood than usual when I walked down the Capitol steps at the close of a short session and turned toward the hills. Harrison was standing on the walk, and he nodded to me in a friendly way. "Let me join you," he said. "I've some questions of interest to ask you."

"Come along," I replied.

He said nothing until we passed between the houses and were on the slopes then he turned to me with rather more of reserve than he was in the habit of using.

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finally, if you are ever going to use your knowledge against Grey to secure the release of his wife?"

"No," I replied shortly. "Then all I've got to say is that you're an infernal fool with your scruples. As I told you before, I'd do it myself but I don't want to free her merely for you. I can't afford to appear as the agent in the matter. Things are coming to such a pass that there may be an explosion here."

He seemed to speak more in sorrow than in anger, and I asked him what he meant by a possible explosion.

"Grey is insanely jealous," he replied. "The man is a thorough Mormon, or he has the makings of one. He is jealous of you, of you, of me, of everybody who comes near either. I can't give him cause in one quarter, but, by George, why not?"

He stopped suddenly and laughed—the laugh was a mixture of satire, amusement and unholy glee, and I guessed his meaning.

"Why not?" he said. "I shook my head and walked on in silence, Harrison still by my side. I knew that he was thinking over his plan, and I was sure that the idea appealed strongly to his strange humor. He was Grey's lieutenant, that is in a political sense, but he could never care for Grey himself. At the crest of the second hill he left me, turning back toward the town and from the heights. I saw his figure far down in the valley, clearly outlined in the bright sunshine."

The next day Pauline Harmon appeared again in the lobby of the house, duly escorted by the elderly aunt, Mrs. Crossfield, and took a seat quietly in a rather remote corner. She was fully maintaining her new reputation, which was now practically her only Frankfort name, and many of the members were glad enough to go into the lobby and talk to one so handsome and so attractive. Nor was I surprised to see Harrison rise from his desk, walk deliberately down the aisle and make his way to Pauline Harmon, where he took a seat beside her and was soon in animated conversation. Harrison was a man of fine face and figure, with the addition of the intellectual quality that is generally known as personal magnetism, and I knew that his attentions would please Pauline Harmon. From my seat I could see her eyes sparkling and a gratified smile on her face.

The next afternoon, a beautiful one, Harrison took Pauline Harmon driving. As I have said before, everything is known, and two or three people told me of it. There was no reason why he should not take her, she was a widow and he an unmarried man, while both had reached the years of discretion, yet I felt that it would cause much talk. I was not mistaken. In a few days the whole town was discussing Harrison's infatuation, and I was forced to smile at the use of the word "infatuation" in this instance. It was Jimmy Warfield who told me a tale of progress two or three days later. He came into my room and threw himself into my easy chair by the window and said:

"Well, Harry, it's on, and it's in full blast."

"What's on, and what's in full blast?" "The flirtation between Harrison and Pauline Harmon. He is in constant attendance upon her, and I understand George Grey is in a state that cannot be described. He is furious and at the same time helpless. Harrison is his campaigner, and Grey believes that Harrison is infatuated. He still cherishes the foolish idea that he can be made Governor, but that nobody except Harrison can do it; therefore he is afraid to quarrel, and also he is afraid to stir up a row because he has a wife here in Frankfort, such a woman that it makes me a decided believer in the fallibility of Providence when it gave her to George Grey."

I did not answer him. I found no amusement in the situation. "I think," continued Warfield, "that it is all malicious mischief on the part of Harrison. I don't believe he really cares for Pauline Harmon."

He had made a shrewd guess, but I was still silent.

"I believe Mrs. Grey does not object to Harrison's venture," he said presently. "I could well believe it. It would be a relief to Alicia to see these energies turned elsewhere. But of Alicia herself I saw but little, though I met her once at the house of Judge Wharton."

My attention was absorbed now for the time being by the Apportionment Bill, which was fast coming to an issue. Harrison led the opposition, speaking often with great eloquence, satire and point, and showing himself a consummate parliamentary leader, when he cared.

(To be Continued.)

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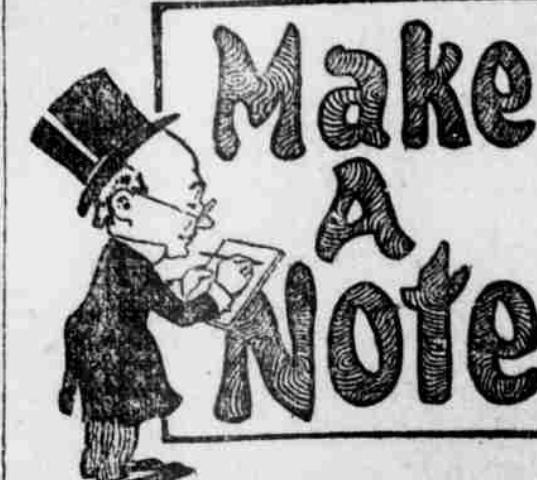
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